

JOHN STEINBECK'S

# CANNERY ROW

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A · TIME · TO · REMEMBER



*Photography & Text*

*by Tom Weber*



HEADING OUT

*Van Weter*



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The photographs in this book have been selected from three permanent exhibits hanging in the Monterey Conference Center, the Monterey Cannery on Cannery Row and the John Steinbeck Library, Salinas, California.

A portion of the proceeds from the sale of this book will be used to fund the John Steinbeck Library and the Monterey Library Fund.

*A John Steinbeck Companion Book*


# CANNERY ROW

A · TIME · TO · REMEMBER



*Photography & Text  
by Tom Weber*

*Foreword  
by John Gross, Director  
John Steinbeck Library*

ORENDA  UNITY PRESS



*Man and fire did the rest.*

*... and in the bay,  
the concrete piers  
that once held up a stage of life,  
now are marker shrines  
where canneries stood.*





## *Epilogue*

*The play is over.  
The curtain falls.  
The images are gone.  
But just across a page in time  
a new show comes to life . . .*

*It's Curtain Call!  
The stage is set. The props are new.  
A ballet of 'golden' tourist lights flash on Cannery Row.  
A new cast of actors take their places  
and listen for their cues . . .*





CANNERY ROW



Tom Water

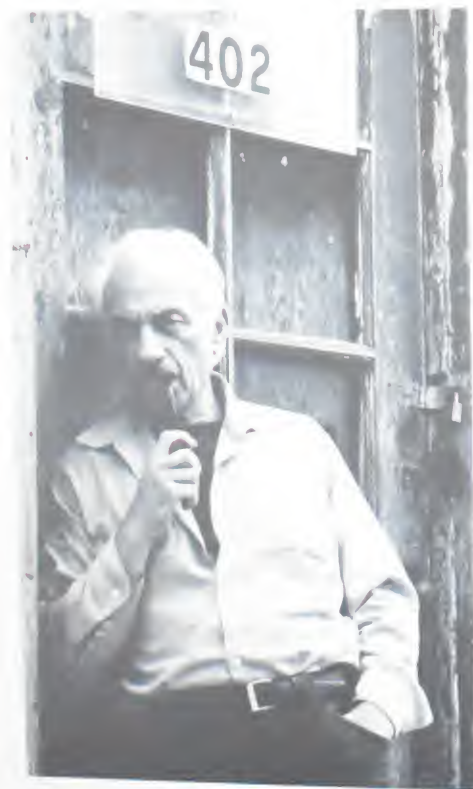
### About the Author

Tom Weber, author, investigative reporter and veteran photojournalist is a native of New York's "Hell's Kitchen." He has been carrying a camera and chasing stories since he was 18 years old.

The scope of his reportage for metropolitan newspapers and magazines has touched on every stratum of society. He has interviewed presidents, prime ministers, "terrorists" and hookers. He is a specialist in geo-politics with strong emphasis on the Third World.

Weber's work as a foreign correspondent has taken him around the world nine times. He has lived with headhunters, photographed his own ambush in the South Pacific and eaten camel meat in Uzbekistan. He also worked as a commercial fisherman and stevedore on the San Francisco waterfront.

He maintains his studio and headquarters on Cannery Row where he has been documenting the "street" since the Steinbeck era.



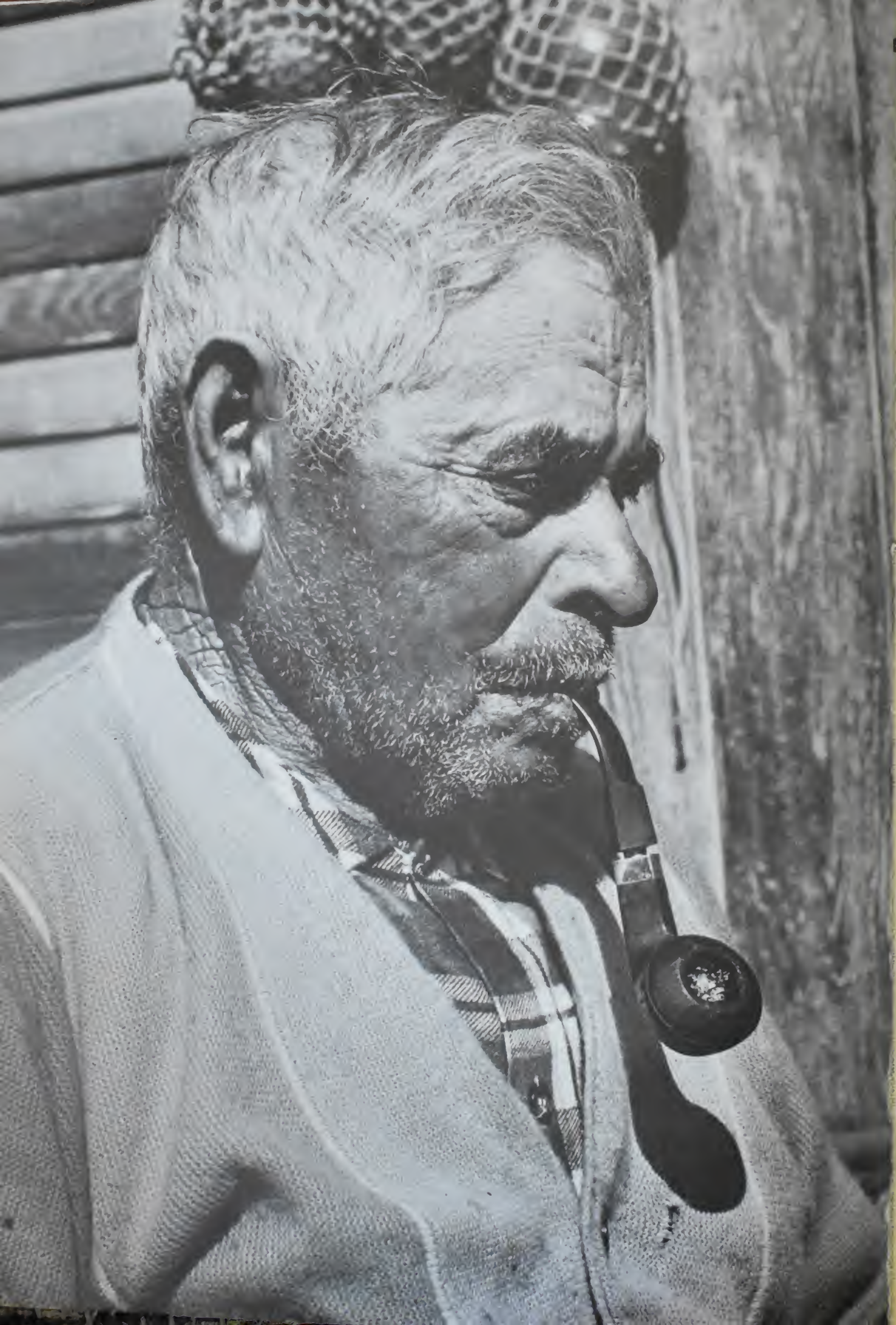
## Remembering Joe

Over the years, I interviewed several hundred fishermen, cannery workers and cannery owners. Except for my written notes, they are mostly past recall. But there were a few I never forgot. One of them was "Joe."

I was talking with the owner of a cannery when an old man shuffled into the office and stood staring at me.

"Here's just the man you should talk to," the canner said. "Joe has been around here from the beginning of time. Go on, Joe, tell him how old you are . . ."

*"I'm 92," Joe said,  
eyes surprised  
like he heard his age  
for the first time.  
His words were quiet  
like Monterey fog.  
He was thin as a trolling spar,  
arms hung taut  
as trolling lines,  
with a leaden weight  
of wasted years  
in each hand.  
Harsh winds, burning sun  
and smoldering dreams  
charred his face.  
But his fingers were still nimble  
for mending nets:  
"I go down to the bay every day  
to make sure the boats are still there."  
The canner tapped his forehead:  
"Joe was one of my best fishermen,  
lost his son in the war.  
Been a little off ever since.  
Sometimes he sits down there on the dock  
and talks to a seagull."  
"Sometimes I talk to a seagull," Joe said.*





## Foreword

With gripping photographic images and unforgettable hard-boiled text, Tom Weber has thrown an indelible spotlight on the life and times of Cannery Row, a street made famous by John Steinbeck's immortal classic.

Just as Steinbeck wrote about an era long gone, so did the author-photographer of this book draw his words and images from the past, painting a vivid, graphic and empathetic backdrop for the Cannery Row story.

It was a different life in a different time that Steinbeck celebrated. His genius captured a special piece of Americana that will live as long as people read.

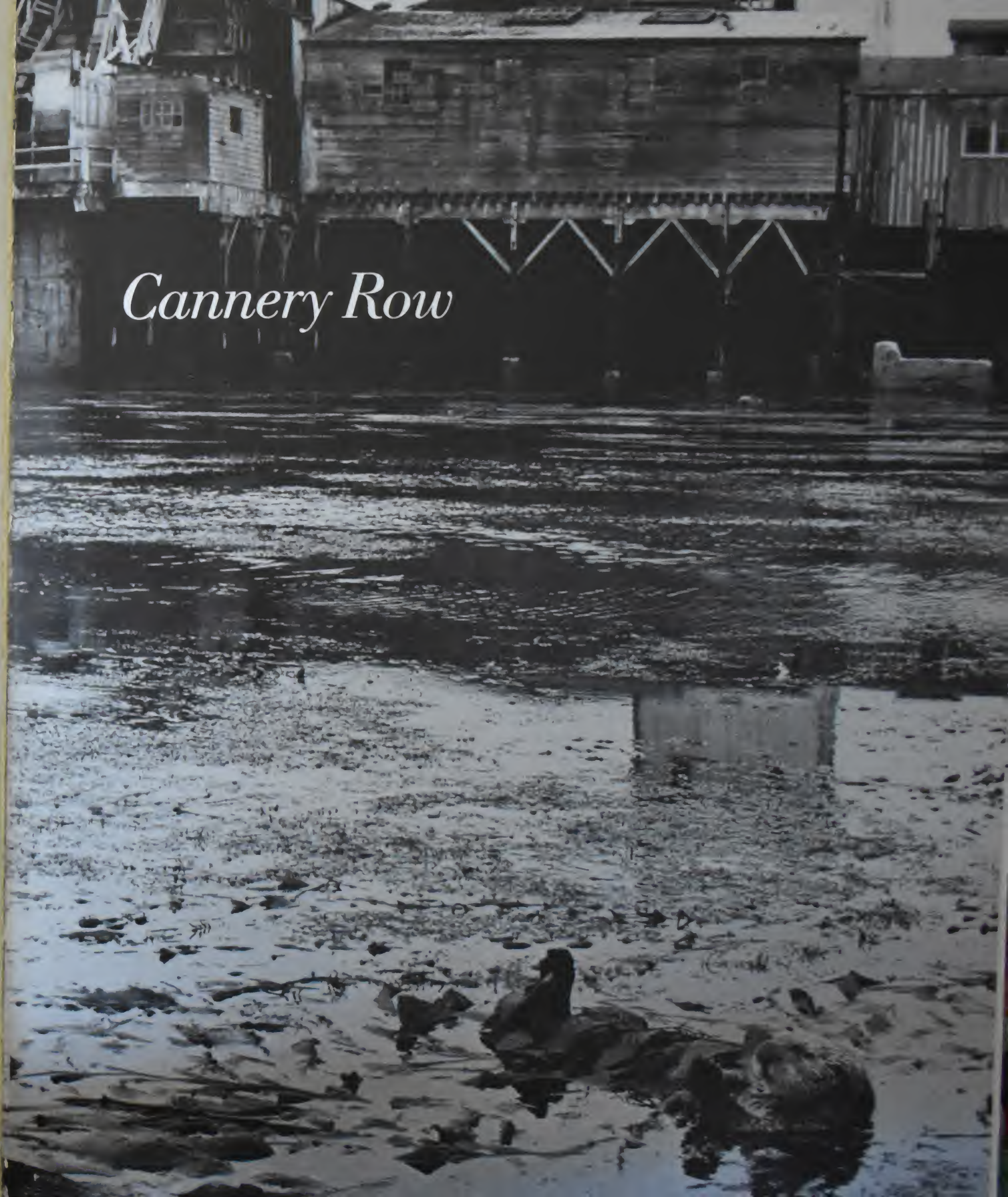
"Cannery Row" symbolizes an era that will never come again. Everything is gone, the buildings, the characters, old fishermen, cannery workers, canneries, Doc and the "boys" and Dora and the "girls."

But when you read Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* and let your eyes and fancies linger on the pages of this book, "A Time to Remember," an enchanting story of yesterday jumps out at you to tell life.

You will be touched by the "magic" of Cannery Row as seen through the eyes of Tom Weber. The author of this book has given the street a new dimension and preserved for us in a most fitting fashion, the legend of Steinbeck and the street he wrote about, a street that will survive forever in the world of living literature.

JOHN GROSS, DIRECTOR  
*John Steinbeck Library*

*Cannery Row*





Here they are,  
images of old Monterey . . .

splinters and reflections from the past,  
canneries washed in piebald grays  
by moody suns and harried rains,  
the wood marred soft by flailing sands,  
clawed raw by talons of wild sea water  
and aged by cold winds  
that shook the rafters loose from shivering.

I ran to hold these images  
before they left no trace at all.  
But you can't grab much from running time . . .  
perhaps the tune of a wistful song  
or stories threadbare from retelling  
and always the cold black numbers  
that lock the feats and failures of yesterday  
in tombstone graphs.  
These are for the catching.

But not the shrieking shafts of cannery whistles  
bouncing off the black-night fog  
calling cannery workers:  
"To work, to work,  
the fleet is in.  
It's better to work than sleep."

That sound will not come again.  
Nor will the sudden splash of lemon lights  
from clapboard windows in humble homes  
where cannery workers yawned themselves awake  
and ran to snatch  
'another day, another pay,'  
a crust of morning bread,  
the moan of evening love . . .  
and all the living in between.

You could not capture these,  
nor the sighs and grunts  
and sounds of mingled moods  
and profanity in a dozen tongues.

## Prologue

Who knows where they all came from,  
Portugal, Italy, China, Spain . . . ?  
Who knows what all they talked about  
while they cleaned and canned  
and boiled sardines?

One day the whistles didn't blow.  
"The fish are gone," the canner said  
and hungry workers  
turned their hopes to other trades  
in other places  
and took away the warmth  
of their simple people noise.

All gone, now,  
and the old fishermen with calloused hands  
from pulling line and mending nets . . .  
and the creaking sighs of restless wood  
in the angry blast of squalling nights . . .  
and the ever haggling seagulls  
dragging strings of fish gut from the bay.  
Going, too, are the few who remember.

Here then, are these images  
from the time of other men  
who came and built and fished the waters  
and thought their dream would be "forever."

Here is their "forever" now:  
the rotting planks and doorless doors  
and window sashes with glassless holes  
that sucked in torrents of winter rain  
and called each fog like a reckless lover.

And in the bay, the concrete piers  
that once held up a stage of life,  
now are marker shrines  
where canneries stood.

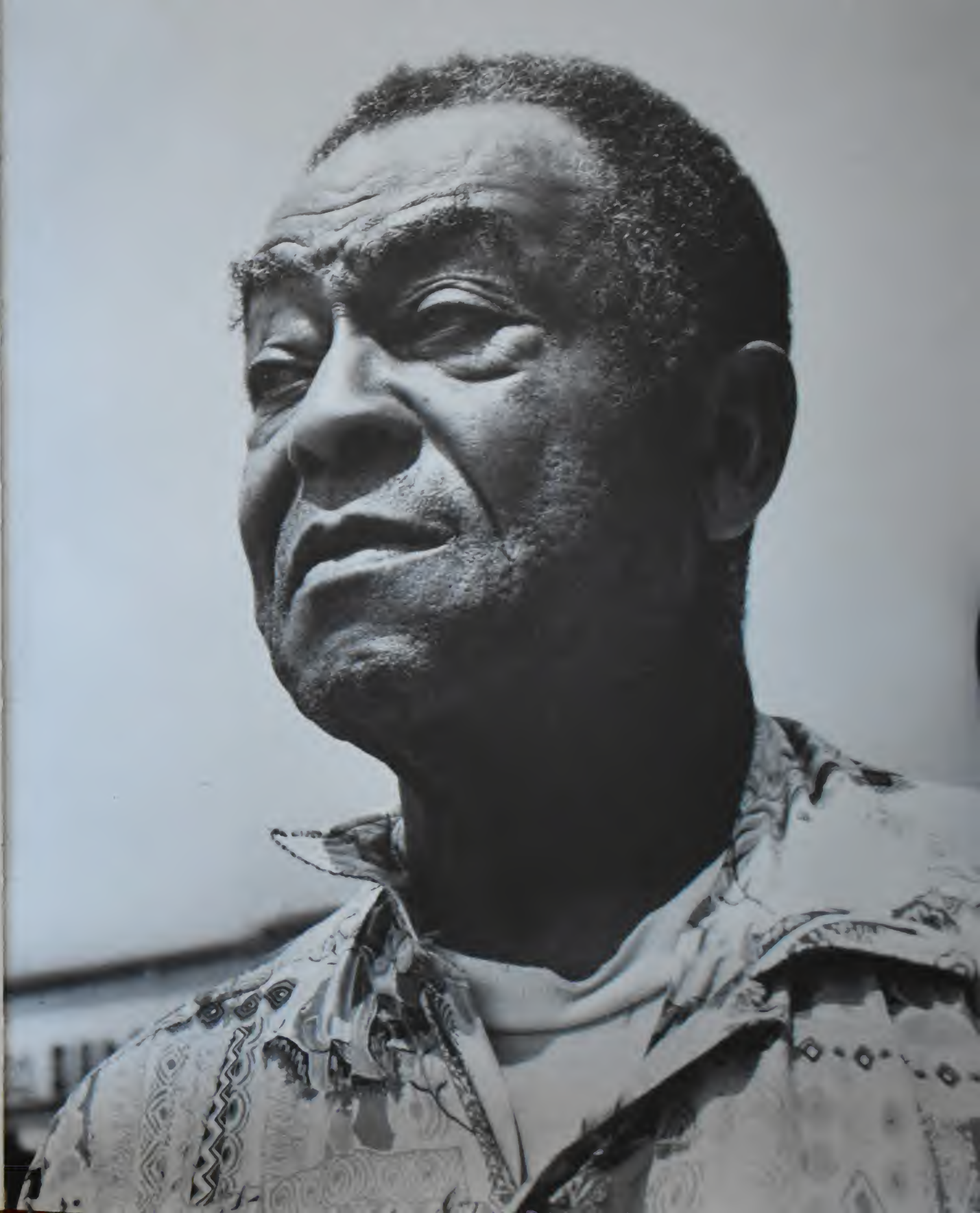
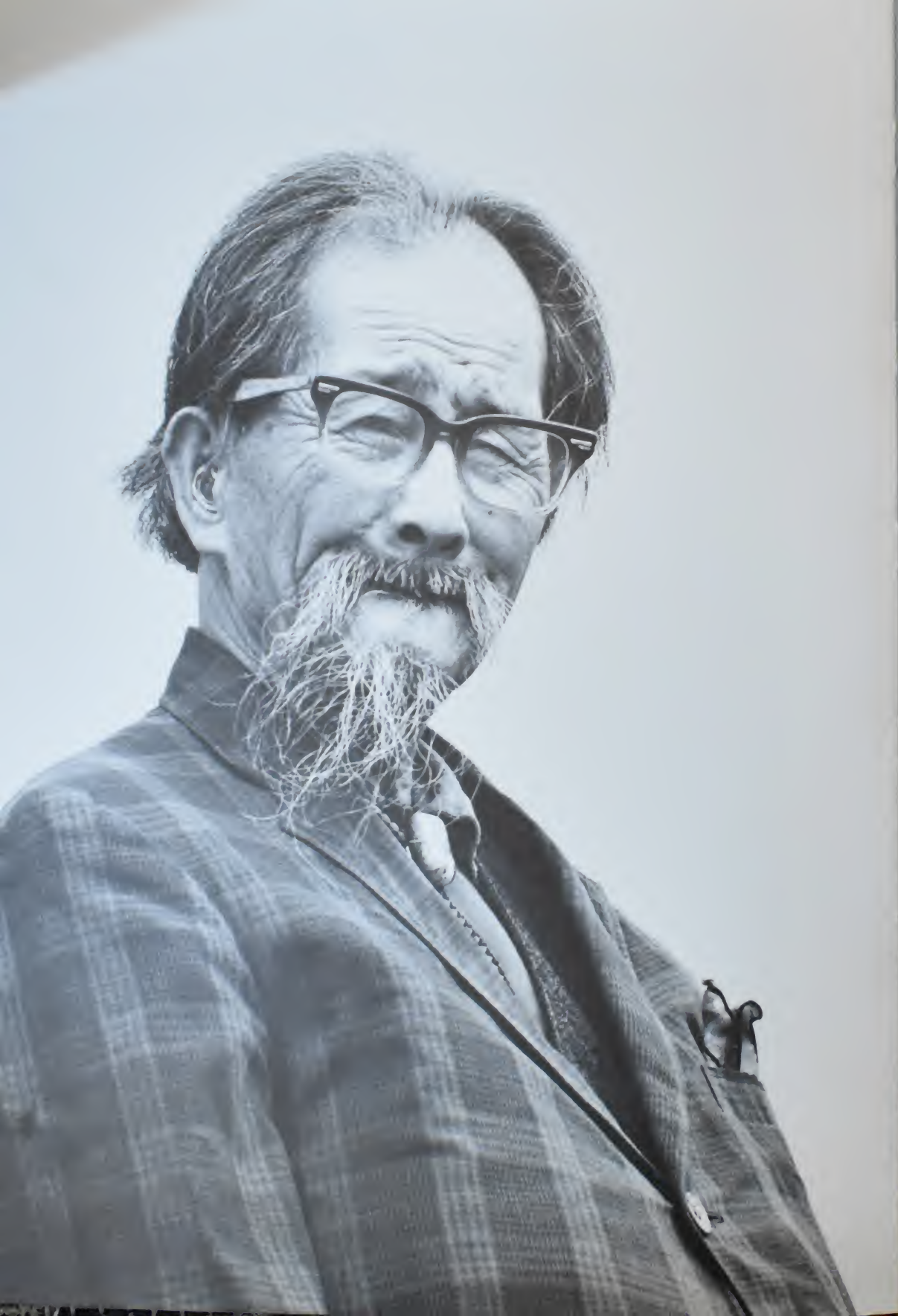
TOM WEBER  
Monterey, California





*Who knows where they all came from  
to catch and can and pack sardines?*







*They lived in humble homes,  
tied their dreams  
to the tail of a silver fish . . .*



*One day the seiners hoisted empty net.  
The silver fish were all used up . . .*



*cannery whistles died of rust ...*







*Fishermen rigged their boats  
for other fish . . .*

*to troll the waters  
or drag the bottom*





*and hunt whatever the sea would give . . .*





*They are hunting still . . .*

*Fog-wet silence  
brushed the sardine street  
in shades of scaling gray . . .*



*In the bay,  
a few reflections from the past*



*where otters  
dozed  
in cozy quilts  
of tangled kelp*



*while I ran to catch these images  
before they left no trace at all . . .*



*A rusty shovel, a little brine,*

*nets to raise and dock the catch*





*A sardine dump for the cannery fleet*

*A flimsy shed to butcher the fish*





THE GREAT MARCH  
ON WASHINGTON  
AUGUST 28, 1963

THE GREAT MARCH  
ON WASHINGTON  
AUGUST 28, 1963





*Chinese murals on a wall,*



*the anchor of a sailing ship.*



And remains of walls  
of one who left  
that marked the scene  
of the family man.

*With the fisherfolk gone,  
a new cast of actors came on stage.  
They were dreamers and punks,  
poets and whores,  
musicians and con men,  
buffoons and bums . . .*



*They made their homes  
in the festering hulks.*

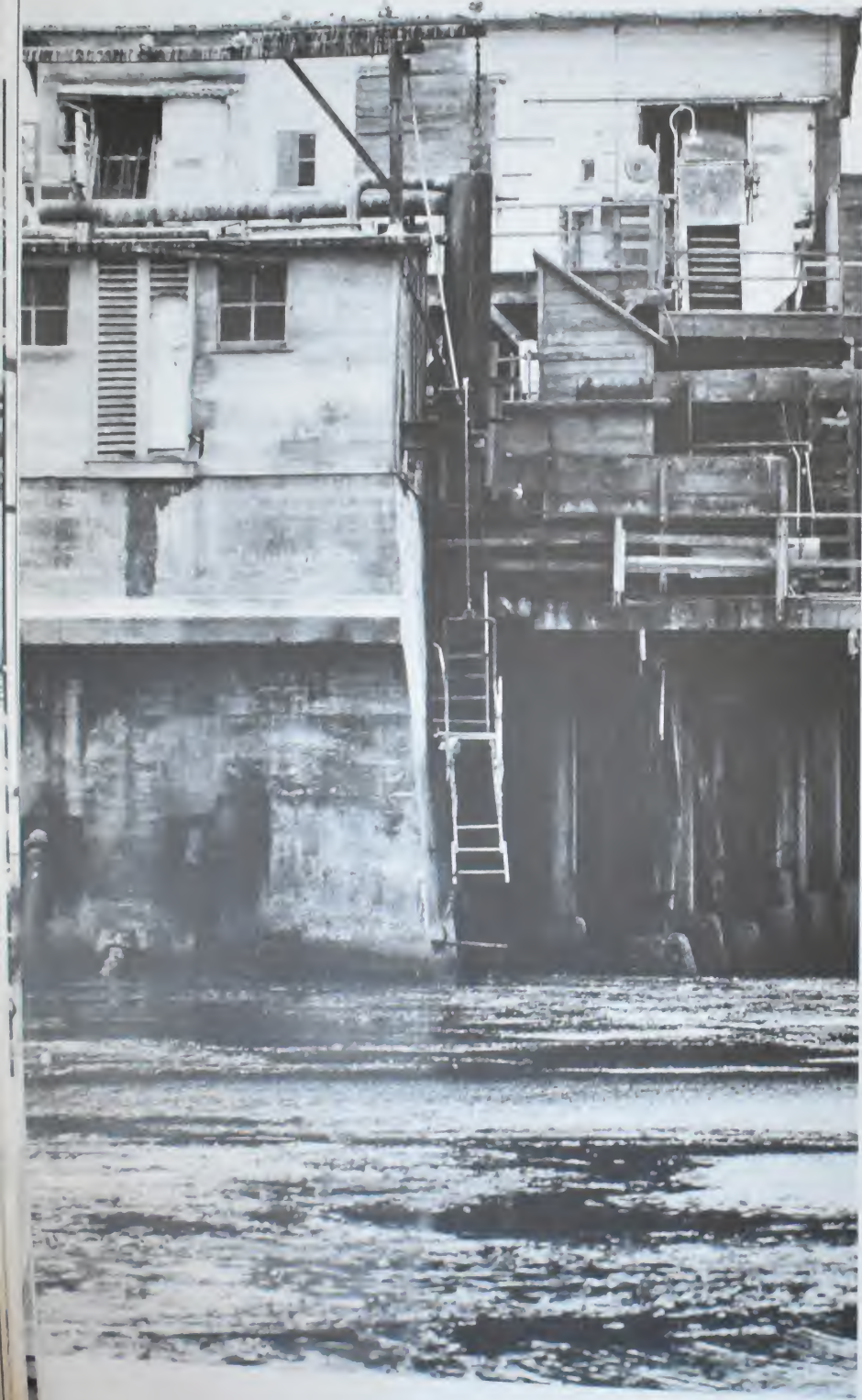




*They looked out at the sea  
through the million eyes  
of yesterday's "jaws."*

*They drank their booze in Rickett's lab  
and splattered their dreams on the floor.*



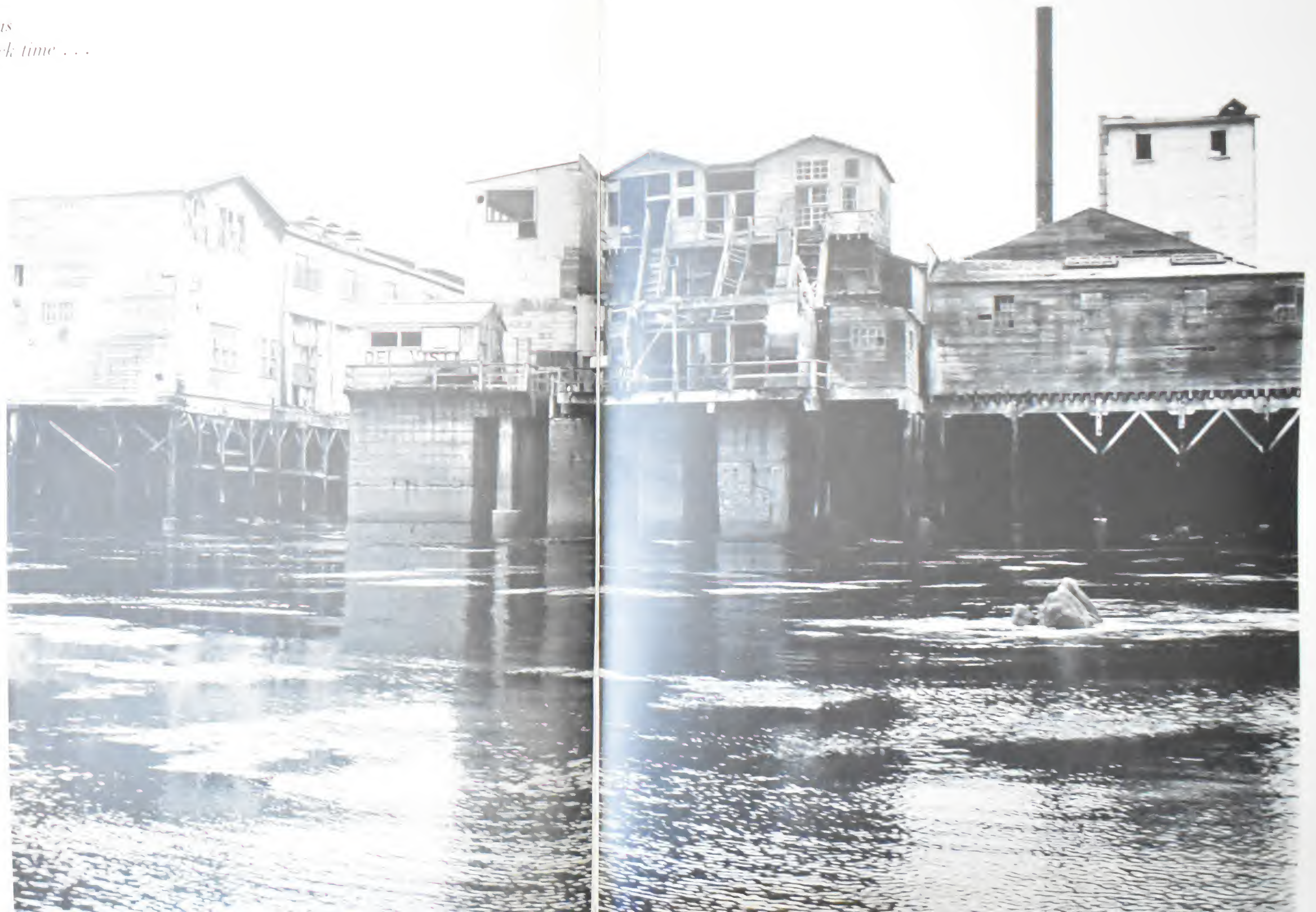


*They slept  
in shambles  
of rubble . . .*



*and mountains of tin.*

*This was  
Steinbeck time . . .*





*The time of bordellos, beans  
and homespun hooch  
and Wing Chong's grocery store*

*A time of the ebbing tide,  
a quiet, brooding time . . .*



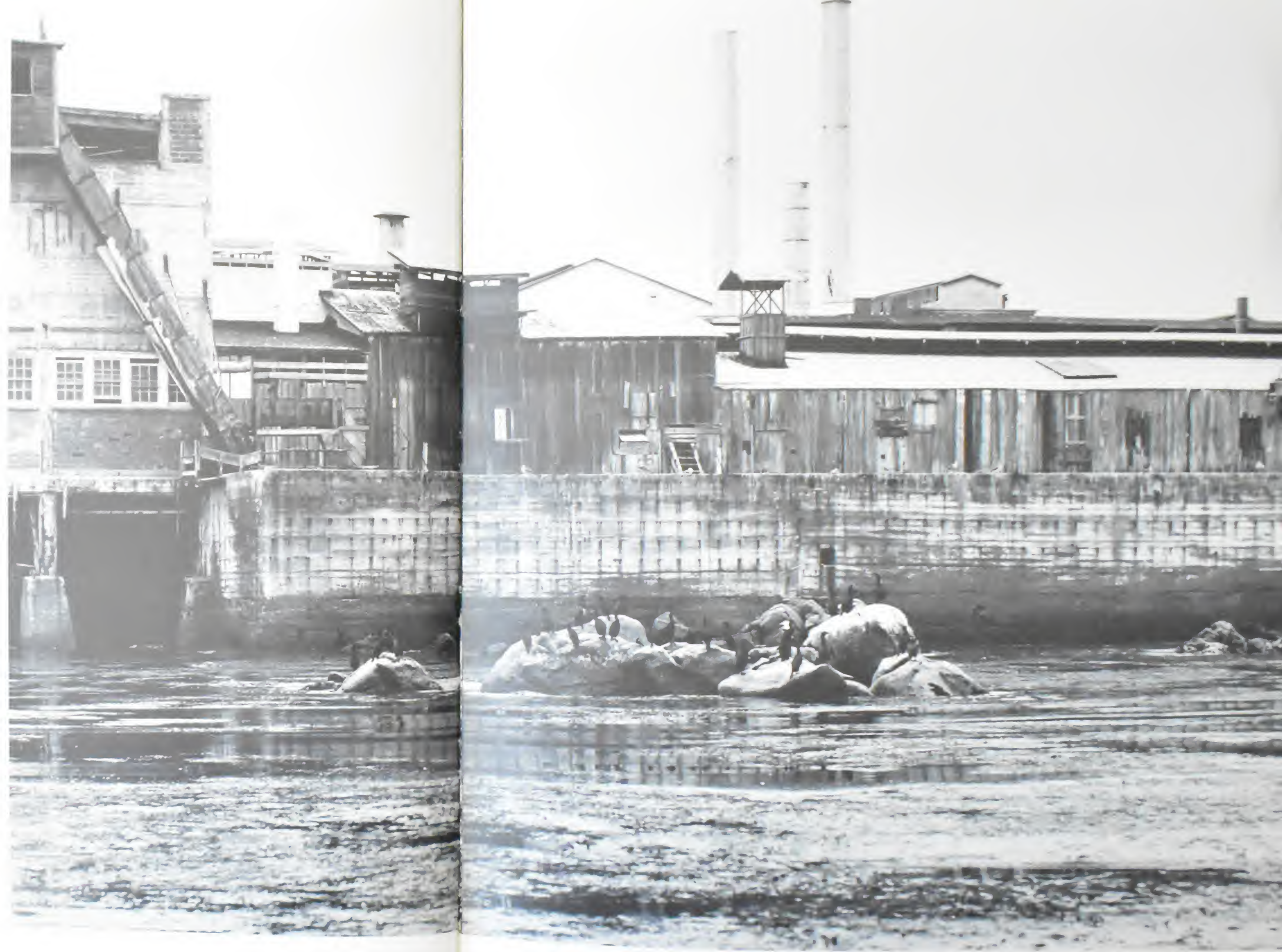


*Down in the bay,  
the restless birds  
recalled the feast  
of better years.*

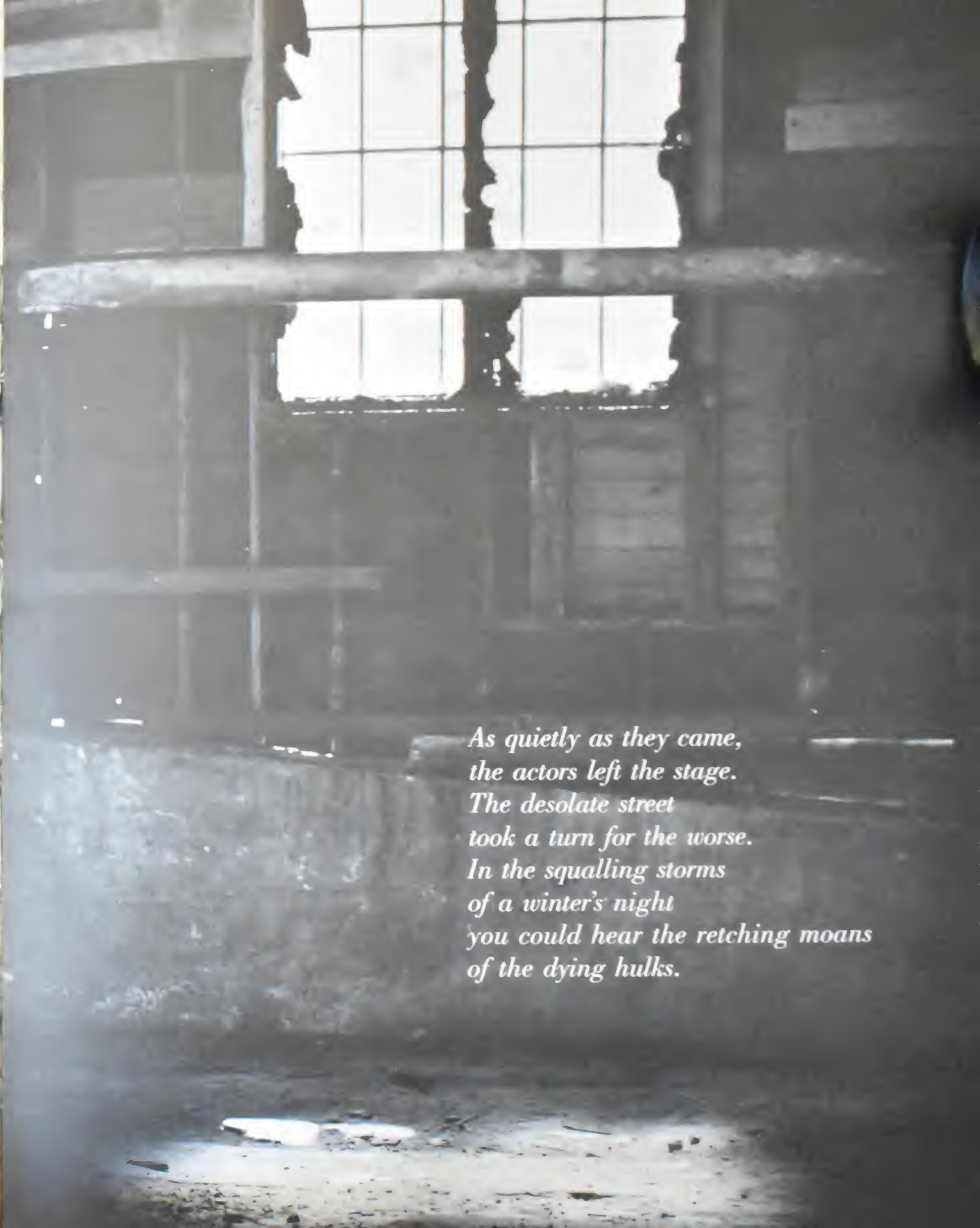




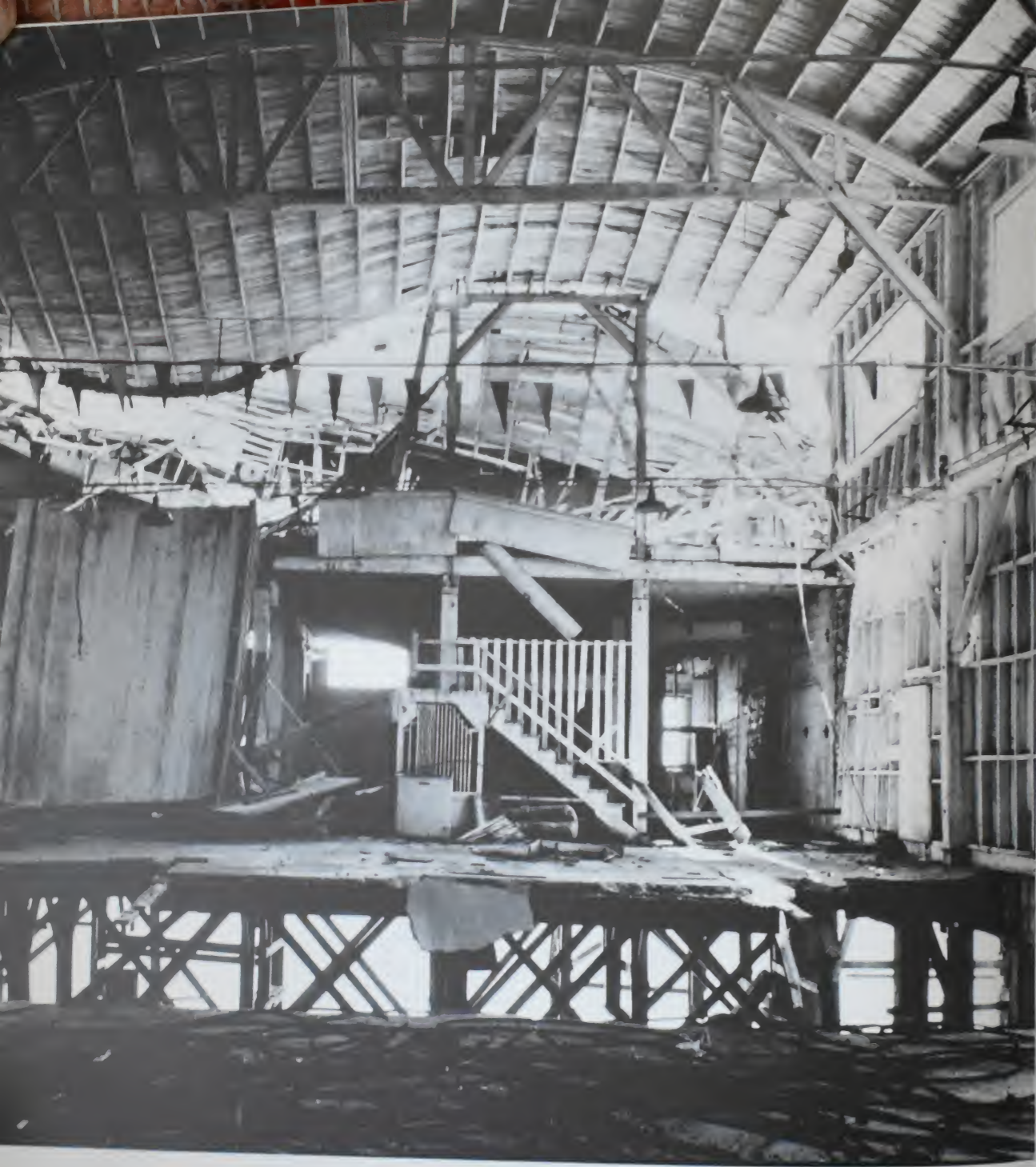
*The cormorant sat  
in mourning black . . .*



*Seals barked lazy to the sky.*



*As quietly as they came,  
the actors left the stage.  
The desolate street  
took a turn for the worse.  
In the squalling storms  
of a winter's night  
you could hear the retching moans  
of the dying hulks.*



*Gale winds took  
what the tides forgot . . .*

